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ARCHDEACONRY of WINCHESTER.

Being a Vindication of the Petition presented the last Sessions of Parliament to the Legislature, for the Removal of Subscription to *human* Formularies of *religious Faith* and *Doctrine*, from the Misrepresentations of Dr. Balguy, in a late Charge to the Clergy of his Archdeaconry.

In which also the Question, "Whether Subscription to the 39 Articles of the Church of *England* be constitutionally required of the *Clergy*," is *occasionally* discussed.

By BENJAMIN DAWSON, L.L.D.

Rector of BURGH in SUFFOLK.

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BISHOP WARBURTON, as the means for restoring the UNITY OF THE SPIRIT, recommends the retrenching all unnecessary Articles, to which the animosity of parties, the Superstition of barbarous ages, and even the negligence of time, have given an imaginary importance, and by reducing the Formula of faith to the primitive Simplicity: leaving all disputable points, together with such other, as no party deems necessary, to the free decision of every man's private judgement: whereby the terms of CHURCH COMMUNION will be made as wide as is consistent with the welfare and good government of a SOCIETY.

Sermon on Church-Communion, Vol. II.

Page 5. line

— 18. line

— 33. line

— 38. line

ERRATA.

- Page 5. line 18. for enormous, read erroneous.
- 18. line 8. for trust, read truth.
- 33. line 11. for sentimeuts, read sentiments.
- 38. line 14. for unformly, read uniformly.

TO THE
C L E R G Y
OF THE
ARCHDEACONRY of WINCHESTER:

GENTLEMEN,

THE opposers of a reform of our Ecclesiastical establishment, as proposed in the *Confessional*, have all proceeded in their arguments upon a principle which would justify the establishment of Popery, or of any religion whatsoever *but* the Protestant. None of them, however, save *one*, have hitherto *avowed* the principle. *One* only excepted, they have either had the modesty to disguise it; or shewn so much zeal against it as to be offended at the imputation; or they have had the decency and discretion to retire on detection. *One* only is not ashamed—*One* only is not afraid—*One* alone thinks it not discreditable nor unsafe, (such are the times!) to re-enter *unmasked* the stage of debate. Dr. BALGUY stands sin-

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gle in openly denying the use of reason in religion to the bulk of mankind. Dr. BAL-GUY stands single, *as yet*, in declaring to the world, that he *means* to defend Popery.

Am I under a mistake, Gentlemen? — am I uncandid, and seek an unfair occasion to impeach the honour of your Arch-deacon? — You, who heard him, will acquit me : All, who have seen the Charge, must acquit me : And to the rest the Arch-deacon himself shall acquit me. — “ If it “ should be thought that I am here offer- “ ing a defence of Popery, it would only “ be too candid an interpretation. I *mean* “ to defend not Popery *only*, but Paganism “ itself. I *mean* to defend every established “ religion under heaven.”

The case is most clear. The Writer himself being judge, I am not uncandid. I wish the case was not so clear in my favour. I wish there had been some room left for my readers to suspect me to be under a mistake ; nay, room to think me
want-

wanting in candour. Willingly would I forfeit something of my reputation with the public (and no man values it more) in *that* article, if it would save the honour of your Archdeacon here. Because his honour is, in this case, more immediately connected with the credit of our Religious establishment, and indeed of Christianity itself. For what will be thought of a religion, to vindicate which recourse is seriously and avowedly had to those principles and maxims of the Church of *Rome*, on which she founds her enormous claims, and conducts her tyranny over the consciences of men?

Well then, Gentlemen, this matter being settled beyond a doubt, What, you may demand, is my business with you?—Is it only to entertain you with an invective against your Archdeacon?—No, Gentlemen; And, I trust, what has been said, being admitted by himself as only *too* candid an interpretation of his meaning, cannot deserve that name: Nor is it to insult him either on the infirmity of his reasoning, or on the

disreputable light in which he suffers himself to be viewed. Under a real concern for the honour and interest of our Protestant establishment, so daringly discredited by the *Charge*, I wait upon you, Gentlemen, with my wishes to dissuade you from engaging, at the call of your Archdeacon, in an opposition to the plain principles of the Reformation from Popery. I wish you to be sensible of the importance of invariably adhering to those principles, an early declension from which opened the way *again* to encroachments on our Christian priviledges: And I mean to invite you to concur with those of your brethren who are associated for the purpose of regaining those priviledges in the full extent they were asserted at the Reformation. Shall I be too free with you, Gentlemen, in adding, that I wish you to consider the contribution of your assistance in this cause as your *duty*, a duty become such by the times, and your Archdeacon's presumption upon them, when the maxims of the *Romish* church begin to be disseminated *openly* among

among his Majesty's subjects. In this concurrence you will at least consult your own honour as Protestant clergymen, and the honour as well as the support of that Religious establishment to which you belong. For you may perceive from the whole conduct of the controversy on the subject of subscription, more especially, since its revival upon the appearance of the *Confessional*, how *impossible* it is, in an opposition to such design, to keep the argument clear of *Papish* principles; and from the unhappy instance before us you may perceive, how *difficult* it is any longer to support the character of *consistency* and *sincerity*, without an *avowed* recourse to the same.

But, palpably enormous and even fatal *error* to all true religion as the principles, on which he has reasoned are, if his objections to a Reformation on the plan of the *Petition* lately presented to Parliament for relief in the matter of Subscription, may be thought to have some weight, I will under-

undertake to shew, that every thing he has said in disparagement of the *Petition* (a) is either mere *aspersions*, (for which you must allow him deserving of censure) or proceeds from the grossest *misconception of its nature*, (which also, on a subject so plain and made so public, is his own fault) or that it rests on *such reasonings* as, (if we must pity and not blame the man for his infirmity in that respect,) must discredit the understandings of those, who can be imposed upon by it.

The *Charge* sets out with calling the late attempt to obtain a repeal of the law which requires Subscription to *human* forms of religious faith, “ an *attack* on our Ecclesiastical establishment.” —It is an easy matter to give *bad names*, and a very common practice to treat in this manner every proposal, which has nothing but its own rea-

(a) Confining my remarks, however, to the first fifteen pages of the *Charge*, the remainder of it referring, for the sentiments of what he terms *the Party*, to a printed paper unauthorized by the *Petitioners*.

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sonableness, however certain that be, to support it against bigotted attachments and many worldly considerations. Whether the present Proposal deserves the name here given it, or not, the *Namer* is certainly to be blamed; because in using such language *previously* to the discussion of the point in question, (*b*) he meanly appeals to vulgar prejudice, and hopes to find advantage in mere abuse.

To the same account, Gentlemen, must be placed his naming us *your adversaries*, making *you* of *his party*, and suggesting that we are adversaries of *the Church*, though we only oppose, or rather *defend* ourselves against *such* churchmen as *himself*. But all such invidious terms from your Archdeacon are suited only to low and illiberal minds; and it is not, in my apprehension, very decent and respectful to

(*b*) Dr. Balguy undertakes to make a *fair and impartial* enquiry, whether reason be for or against, the imposers of Subscription. But is it *fair and impartial* to set out in such an illiberal strain?

try

try their effect upon *those*, who may expect to be addressed as *gentlemen*, and as *literate* men above being influenced by such vulgar suggestions.

Adversaries of the Church, however, he with great reason has styled us, if what is next insinuated against us have any just foundation, *viz.* “that we may
“ satisfy ourselves whether truth and rea-
“ son be with us, or against us, when we
“ demand subscription to articles of Re-
“ *ligion*.”—Here he would insinuate that we *question* the [truth and] reasonableness of demanding subscription to any articles of *Religion*. But it is doing us great wrong, to give this turn to our Design; seeing it is not a subscription to *articles of religion* we object to, but only a subscription to *such* articles of religion as are of *human* device and *human* composition. To the articles of religion which are set forth in *Holy Scripture* we can have no objection to subscribe, having professed our belief thereof, and left it upon record in the

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Petition itself.—That by the free exercise of our own reason and judgement, “ we have been *brought to*, and *confirmed in* the belief of the Christian religion, *as it is contained in the HOLY SCRIPTURES.*”

To this insinuation succeeds one equally false and more invidious — that “ our aim is not to *reform*, but to *abolish* the *national church.*”—But that this is not our aim, nor can be a consequence of our design, is as plain, as any thing can be, to every disinterested and unprejudiced judge of the matter. For the Proposal respects only *one* particular in our Ecclesiastical establishment, *viz.* Subscription of assent to *human* articles of *religious* faith and doctrine. Now a repeal of the Laws enjoining such Subscription cannot endanger, or any way prejudice the church : Unless it be true that the Church would rest less securely upon the decrees of *God* himself, than upon the determinations of *Man*.

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It is therefore most evidently the *improvement*, not the *destruction*, the *reformation*, not the *abolishment* of our present establishment, which is aimed at by the Petitioners. And proposals of this nature have ever been considered by men not more distinguished by their stations in the church, than by their learning, moderation, and withal their attachment to our constitution both in Church and state, not only as harmless, but as worthy of encouragement.

“To propose the *amendment*,” says one of these ornaments of our church, (c) “of *some* particulars in the present establishment, in order to the making it more perfect, is what cannot be well complained of.”—And it is no wonder, when we consider the fatal tendency of such schemes as that offered by your Archdeacon in defence of popery, to find this most

(c) HODLEY, late Bp. of Winchester.

excellent among the Vindicators of Religious liberty add —“ But to propose a
 “ scheme, which cannot be admitted,
 “ without the entire *destruction* and total
 “ *abolition* of the whole present constitu-
 “ tion, can end in no good.”—For, deny
 the use of that reason to the bulk of man-
 kind which God has given them, in re-
 ligious; Lock up the Scriptures from the
 common people, on the maxim that “ they
 “ cannot use their reason on *religious* sub-
 “ jects,” and you strike at the very root of
 our *Protestant* establishment.

Another learned prelate (*d*) of our
 church goes further, and admonisheth those
 that oppose themselves to such attempts as
 that in which we are engaged, in the follow-
 ing terms —“ Let no one lightly entertain
 “ *suspensions* of any serious proposal for the
 “ advancement of religious knowledge; nor
 “ out of *unreasonable prejudice* endeavour
 “ to obstruct any enquiry, that professes
 “ to aim at the *farther* illustration of the

(*d*) Dr. LOWTH, present Bp. of Oxford.

“ great scheme of the gospel in general,
 “ or the removal of error in any part,
 “ in faith, in doctrine, in practice, or in
 “ worship.”

Bishop *Wettenhall* has observed—“ He
 “ that shall say, that under our present
 “ settlements all that is established is ab-
 “ solutely the best, and nothing can be
 “ amended, says more than our Church
 “ does, and has a difficult proof lies on
 “ him.”

Bishop *Croft* in answer to those who
 suggest, that more than our forefathers
 did at the reformation is not fitting to be
 done *now*, says—“ Certainly we cannot do
 “ our forefathers a greater honour, than
 “ to observe their rule of reason, to con-
 “ form to the times: And they are grossly
 “ mistaken, who think it a dishonour to
 “ them for us to take away what they
 “ have established, when we keep close to
 “ the *reason* wherefore they *did* establish
 “ it.”—Bishop *Warburton* himself has been

so

so reasonable as to allow—"that the wiser the bottom (consistent with the peace of society, and the being of a Christian church) the wiser and juster is that religious institution." (e)

If it be said, that for the support and very being of a *National* church certain ordinances of men are necessary, and that Subscription to them is an expedient mode of securing obedience to them, it shall be readily granted; allowing in return, that our Design is not concerned with the church, as a *National* church, nor in the least interferes with any human institutions which may be thought necessary to its support, as *such*, but only as it is a *Christian* and *Protestant* church, and as *such*, confessedly subject to the authority of *Jesus Christ* alone.

But we are accused of "complaining in general of the *articles* of the church,

(e) Dr. Balguy himself is my authority for this being the sentiment of *Warburton*, vid. *Charge*, p. 19.

"and

“ and expecting relief, not from the improvement of our present articles, but
 “ the removal of *all* ? ” — Where, I demand of our accuser, do we make such a complaint ? — In what part of the Petition is it to be met with ? — Cite the passage who can, in which the truth of any one *religious* doctrine contained in the articles of the church of England is arraigned. Well known indeed it is, that in a certain great assembly, *not* incompetent judges of this matter, the truth of more than one of the 39 was *occasionally* impeached ; and (what is more) the impeachment went uncontravened. But the complaint of the Petitioners is not of the articles as in *general* containing false and erroneous doctrine, nor of any one of them on *that* score, but of *Subscription* to them, a subscription of unfeigned assent and consent to them, as agreeable to the word of God, though they are drawn up by *mere men*, liable to error and capable of deceit. Nor does our Suit for relief in this matter of subscription extend to *all* the articles of our
 Church,

Church, but to *such* only as imply a denial of the *Sufficiency* and *Exclusive* authority of Scripture, as a rule of religious faith and doctrine. The complaint made, therefore, is *not general*.

And when further your Archdeacon tells you, that “ we expect not relief in “ the improvement of our present articles, “ but in the removal of *all*,” he tells you what is not the truth of the case. For we do not *ask* (and how then can we *expect*) relief in the removal of *all*. Indeed we ask not the removal of *any* of the articles, (*f*) but only the removal of *Subscription* to them ;

(*f*) It would not be inconsistent with the *full* grant of the Petition, to suffer *all* our present articles to remain as they are, without the *least* alteration. The laws relating to the *Subscription*, or *Declaration* of assent to them, might be repealed, and yet the articles themselves continue to be held forth, and recommended by the Church, as a System of explanatory doctrines, tending greatly (if it can be so judged) to edification, and the furtherance of Scripture knowledge.—Or if, for securing the peace of the Church, it should be further thought necessary to restrain Ministers from interpreting Scripture otherwise than according to the present

them; and that, only to *such* of them as are above described—*human* articles of *religious* faith and doctrine. And this may shew you what credit is due to him, when he goes on to tell you, that we are for entering the Church, without Subscription to *any* human formulary *whatsoever*. “No-
 “thing less,” says he, “will be *accepted* by
 “the Petitioners, than an admission into
 “the ministry and the preferments of the
 “church, without subscription to any hu-
 “man formulary *whatsoever*.” But the objection of the Petitioners is not against a Subscription to human formularies *in general*, but only (how often shall we repeat it?) to human formularies of *religious faith* and *doctrine*. How greatly, Gentlemen, have you been imposed upon by your Archdeacon, if you have measured our Design upon *his* Scale!—

present System, this may be provided for, both more equitably and more effectually, by other laws, than those which lay a restraint upon the judgment and consciences of men.

After

After this string of false and abusive representations, which the reader will find in the two first paragraphs of the *Charge*, we are presented with a state of the question between us and our opponents, as follows—" They who understand the nature of their own Petition, will readily agree with me, that the question between us amounts only to this; Whether it be fit for government to employ and reward equally the ministers of *all religions*; or to support *one religion* only, and tolerate the rest." (g)——

This state of the Question, he would have you believe, rises obviously out of the *nature of the Petition*. Now, as to the nature of the *Petition*, that will be best understood (and it is wonderful, that it should be misunderstood by any one) by a recital of the *Prayer* itself.—" Your Petitioners therefore PRAY, that they

(g) Charge, p. 4.

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" may

" may be relieved from such an imposition
 " upon their judgement, (b) and be re-
 " stored to their undoubted right, as
 " *Protestants*, of interpreting Scripture for
 " *themselves*, without being bound by any
 " *human* explications thereof, or required
 " to acknowledge by *Subscription* or *De-*
 " *claration* the trust of any formulary of
 " *religious faith* and *doctrines* whatsoever,
 " beside *Holy scripture* itself."

This is the *whole* of the Petitioner's
 PRAYER to parliament. And what
 ground it affords for stating the above-
 mentioned question upon, or how it can
 be construed into a wish to have *all* the
 different, and even opposite religions esta-
 blished, I am at a loss to conceive. If
 government should grant such a Suit,
 would the grant, let me ask, imply an
 equal encouragement of *all religions*?—

(b) A requirement to acknowledge certain articles
 and confessions of faith and doctrine, drawn up by fallible
 men, to be, all and every of them, agreeable to the
 Holy Scriptures.

Just

Just otherwise. It would utterly *exclude* all other religions, than *that* which is already established in this nation, *viz.* the Christian religion on the *Protestant* basis. There would then be that *uniform appearance* of religion, or at least of *sincerity* in teaching it, which is so favourable to its *general* and *easy* reception. We should then have the *uniform appearance* of a Protestant church. We should not then see its members contentious about the opinions of *men*, but *uniformly* striving for the faith of the *gospel*. We should not hear them cry out (as many now do)—“ I “ am of *Calvin*, I am of *Luther*, I of “ *Arminius*, and I of *Socinus* ! ” — but all *uniformly* professing subjection and allegiance to their *only* Lord and Master *Jesus Christ*, and teaching his father’s will *uniformly* according to the best of their own judgement, unawed by the arrogant claims of any man, or body of men, to share with Christ the dominion over their faith. In short; we might then expect an *uniform appearance* in the public ministration

of God's word, at least in delivering the capital and *essential* doctrines of our Holy religion. We might then expect the people would be told *uniformly* and *unambiguously*—"That Christ came down from Heaven, That he died for the sins of the world, That he has sent his Holy Spirit to assist us." But God forbid it should ever enter the head of the Magistrate, as it has that of your notable Archdeacon, to *tolerate*, though not to *establish*, any different and contrary religion, when the people may be told by their *established* ministers the above-mentioned truths, and hear from *tolerated* preachers, perhaps just the contrary doctrines—"That Christ did *not* come down from Heaven, That he *did not* die for the Sins of the world, That he did *not* send his Holy Spirit to assist us." (i)

Yet

(i) See *Charge*, p. 7.—Our author's Scheme of a toleration of *all* religions under the present Establishment, is so *visionary*, as well as pregnant with *absurdity*, that it would be loss of time to say any thing more to it. But the toleration of *papists* in this kingdom is not
alto-

Yet such a *toleration*, he may think, is preferable to an actual *establishment* of dif-

altogether so *visionary* a scheme, and Dr. *Balguy* is not by far the only one who wishes it success. The following passage, from Archdeacon *Blackburne's* truly excellent and seasonable *Considerations on the present State of Popery in GREAT BRITAIN, &c.* will perhaps give these *Catholic* Spirits a juster idea of the *nature* and *tendency* of such a scheme.

“ As the Civil government of this country hath no points to settle with the Pope, on the subject of distinct powers and privileges, like that of the *Regale* in *France*, the *active obedience* of *British* and *Irish* Roman catholics, who pledge no faith or allegiance to a Protestant government, must be wholly engrossed by the *Head of the Church*. Hence it is obvious, that
 “ the *passive submission* of Papists to Protestant civil
 “ establishments under which they happen to live,
 “ (which has been made an argument by their late
 “ apologists for *tolerating* Popery in *Great Britain* and
 “ *Ireland*,) is not the effect of their *religious principles*,
 “ but merely of the *coercion of our Laws*. The Pope, as
 “ Head of the church, is *alone* the LORD and MASTER
 “ of every *British* and *Irish* Papist: And, by the fun-
 “ damental principles on which his authority is erected,
 “ no *such* papist must even be *passively* submissive to a
 “ Prince or Government declared by the said Pope to be
 “ *heretical*, without his special Dispensation: And how
 “ such dispensation must be *qualified* and *limited*, may be
 “ easily conceived.” *Considerations, &c.* p. 18.

ferent

ferent and opposite religions.— But can any man in his senses, except Dr. *Balguy*—Can *any* man in his *right* senses so understand the nature of our Petition, as if it was an appeal to the Legislature for the fitness of “employing and rewarding equally the ministers of *all* religions?”—Such a construction of our design is really too absurd to be accounted for from prejudice *alone*, at least from any *common* degree of mere prejudice against us. Exasperated and troubled in spirit at our supposed attempt upon the *repose* of the Church as your Archdeacon is, yet could you have believed, Gentlemen, if you had it not from himself, that even he, even in *such* a state of mind, was capable of arguing thus—that to sue for the full enjoyment of our right as protestants, in the interpretation of Scripture, is, in *fact*, to make it a question, “Whether the “ministers of such [pagan and mahometan] religions ought to be employed “and rewarded by a wise magistrate— “Whether *Jupiter* and *Mahomet* ought to “have

" have public honours assigned them, even
 " in a Christian country, on a principle
 " of common equity, and out of a tender
 " regard to the right of private judge-
 " ment?"—So however it is. "Who-
 " ever among the petitioners," says this
 most extraordinary of all the champions
 that have yet entered the field against us,
 " stops *short of this*, fairly gives up the
 " point in debate. If *pagans* and *maho-*
 " *metans* are to be kept out of the public
 " ministry, the question between us is
 " quite changed. We are no longer to
 " inquire, Whether honest men may be
 " excluded from preferment on account of
 " their opinions." (*k*)—Why no. For that
 is not *now*, nor ever *was* the subject of
 our inquiry. We enquire, Whether ho-
 nest *Christians* are justly, equitably and
 expediently excluded from ministering in
 the Church, on account of their religious
 opinions acquired by an *honest* and careful
 perusal of *holy scripture*.

(*k*) p. 9, 10.

But,

But, Gentlemen, you will not, I am sure, expect from me a *grave* refutation of so wild a Charge against the Petition: And I chuse not to treat it *otherwise*. For wild as the Charge appears, it is *seriously* brought; yea, and urged with so much *gravity*, that a humane reader could not laugh at the writer, out of pity to the man. Yet may we profit by it.—It may teach us to what unhappy lengths Prejudice, when thrown off it's guard by passion, and no longer under the conduct of cool *refinement*, will carry a controversialist.

Struck, however, in an interval of reflection, with the extravagance of his own representation, he says—"I will suppose
 " that our adversaries, without departing
 " from their principles, can justify them-
 " selves in confining Ecclesiastical prefer-
 " ments to the Church of Christ." (1) —

(1) p. 10.

Preferments!—Aye, there's the rub that throws the unhappy man off his bias. But is it, may we believe, his concern for the *Church of CHRIST* which has warped his mind?—Is he really so much disturbed with an idea of the danger which, on the plan of the Petitioners, threatens it from the admission of *Jews, Pagans and Mahometans* to a share of its preferments?—I cannot think he foresaw any danger of *damage* to the Church from *that* quarter. It is but too evident his apprehensions are neither for the *Church of CHRIST*, nor of any adversaries of *that* Church. His fear is for the *National Church*; and he grudges the Church of *Christ* the preferments of the Church of *England*. And yet your Archdeacon might be perfectly easy for the secure enjoyment of his share, and might indulge his farther prospects with sufficient tranquility, if his anxiety would but suffer him to take an impartial view of the *nature and object* of the *Petition*, in which *his* Church is not concerned. *That* may remain as it is for us. We

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seek

seek not to despoil the *National* church of her *dues*; but that the *Church of CHRIST* may recover her undoubted and far more valuable rights.

And why should they, and all such as they, who wish and endeavour to regain their just rights, as *Christian* men, be thought unworthy to retain or to acquire the preferments of the *National* church? —The reason assigned is,—Because “it
 “is scarce possible to name, or to invent
 “an opinion more absurd in itself, or more
 “hurtful to Society, or more fatal to the
 “cause of Piety and Virtue, than many of
 “those which have actually been main-
 “tained by men, who *called* themselves
 “Christians.” (*m*)—Well; what then?—
 Are all those who think, with the Petitioners, that Holy Scripture is a *sufficient* and the only *certain* rule of Christian faith and practice, improper objects of Ecclesiastical preferments?—Be it so; and

(*m*). p. 10.

for

for the reason given, *viz.* that, though they *call* themselves Christians, yet they may entertain wrong and dangerous opinions, opinions hurtful to Society, and fatal to the cause of Piety and Virtue. Then the question is, Who are the proper objects?---Shall those only enjoy Ecclesiastical preferment, who, rejecting the authority, and denying the Sufficiency of Scripture, judge it necessary to regulate their faith and practice by *human* formularies of religion?—

But then ; how will this provide against the danger of admitting wrong and hurtful opinions?—For they, I should think, are more liable to err, who take their religious opinions from *Man*, than they, who make the pure word of *God* the rule of their faith. And for the truth of this—that the traditions and commandments of men have greatly corrupted Christianity, and introduced opinions most hurtful to Society, and most fatal to the cause of piety and virtue,—I may safely appeal to

E 2 you,

you, Gentlemen, and to every one but a Papist, and a *defender* of Popery.

But we are not it seems, to extend our severity in judging the church of *Rome* too far; and we are invited by your Archdeacon to direct our attention to other churches which bear the name of *Christian*, and which set forth, on some points, to the full as dangerous doctrine as that which SHE maintains on the same points.

Here, however, we are again brought into a dilemma, out of which I know not how your Archdeacon, on his maxims, will be able to bring us. *Antinomians, Pelagians, Socinians, Moravians, Presbyterians, Quakers, &c.* for their dangerous opinions, he is at no loss how to deal with. These he is for serving like *Pagans* and *Mahometans*, by excluding them from the ministry and preferments of the Church. But what must be done with those, who are in the same predicament with himself? —What must become of you, Gentlemen,
and

and of all those, who have actually subscribed (and by that Subscription hold their respective preferments) to opinions, some of which, he thinks, are at least as dangerous as the contrary ones held by the *Romish* church. “ It would be strange “ indeed,” he says, “ if the *Romish* church “ should have contrived to monopolize all “ manner of opinions, that can justly give “ offence to the Magistrate, and to con- “ fine mischief of every kind within the “ circle of its own communion. It seems, “ *on the contrary*, that *they* who deny the “ necessity of good works, are at least as “ dangerous as *they* who maintain the “ merit of them.” (n)—And yet, dangerous as such men are, Dr. Balguy has given it under his own hand *oftener*, I presume, than *once*, that he denies the necessity of good works, and that there is any merit in them. (o)

Now,

(n) p. 11.

(o) “ We are accounted righteous before God, “ only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus “ Christ by *faith*, and *not* for our own works or de- “ servings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith “ only,

Now, on what foot your Archdeacon can plead his title to be continued in the ministry, or to retain his preferments in *that* church from which he would have the Magistrate exclude men of such dangerous principles, I know not: unless he will say, that he is not one of those dangerous men, neither *believing*, nor teaching the doctrine which he has subscribed. And would he really accept the compliment which has been paid to his *good sense* at the expence of his *sincerity*? (*p*)—It is but a very indifferent one, I think, and not worth his acceptance. Yet such as it is, we cannot allow it to be due to *him*, without derogating from the *good sense* of the *Magistrate*, who has judged differently, and established this doctrine of Justification by faith *only*, “as a most *wholesome* doctrine, and very full of comfort.” If,

“*only*, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the “Homily of Justification.” *Art. XI.* See also *Art. X. XII. XIII.*

(*p*) By Dr. *Priestly*.

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fond of the compliment, he will plead, that the Magistrate may with equal *good sense* connive at the liberty taken with the doctrines he has established, we will admit the Plea, on receiving from him an entire resignation of the argument for the *necessity* of requiring subscription to them.

His next objection to an admission into the ministry of the Church upon the plan of the Petition, is grounded on his apprehensions for the safety of the *State*, and the security of *Civil* authority.—Senseless affectation of political discernment! As if the welfare and security of any State is not less endangered by an establishment of *genuine* Christianity, than by one which admits precarious doctrines, and the traditions of weak and fallible men.

But in what are his apprehensions founded?—In a Position, which indeed is too true; but which itself shews, that
danger

danger to the State is to be apprehended from that very quarter he hath undertaken to defend. The Position is this —“That many doctrines *called* religious “tend directly to the subversion of *Civil* “*authority.*” (q)

The truth of this position he might have safely rested on the principles and practices of the church of *Rome alone*. But he chuses here also to confine himself to the *reformed* religion; which religion, we are told, “through the folly of some, and “the knavery of others, has too often “proved fatal to the power of the State.” —(r) The Anabaptists in *Germany* are his instance—their follies, their crimes, their cruelties. But what drove them on these extremities?—To account for these, must the principles of reformation be impeached, as subversive of the peace of Society and Civil authority?—they are indeed too often so impeached, maliciously,

(q) p. 12.

(r) p. 13.

though

though *artfully* enough, by Papists, but surely very *idly* and *weakly*, by Protestants. No—The proceedings of the Anabaptists are not, I trust, a sufficient instance, nor any instance at all, of the justness of your Archdeacon's remark, "That the reformed religion has often proved fatal to the power of the State."—For, were not many of these unhappy wretches driven to madness by religious persecution?—And could just sentiments and wise maxims, either in religion, or in politicks, be expected of men, who had been trained up in ignorance and error, and who were prepared and fitted, as it were, by the *Romish* system of folly, superstition and cruelty, for the like iniquity in their turn, though, happily, for want of like power and like policy, unable to establish it under a regular tyranny?—

Or, if we are thought uncandid towards the Church of *Rome* in attributing so much to the spirit and principles, which they had imbibed during their communion with

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Her, I should be glad to know of your Archdeacon, Whether the criminality of their behaviour proceeded—rather, How it *could* proceed, from the principle we contend for, *viz.* the right of interpreting Scripture, every man for himself, according to the best of his judgement and conscience. Whatever Dr. *Balguy's* opinion of Holy Scripture may be, I will venture to assert, that no man, who in consulting it (be the abilities which God has given him ever so slender) (*s*) makes his own judgement and conscience the rule of interpreting his duty, can be instigated by any religious doctrines drawn from *thence*, to subvert the authority of the Magistrate, and the foundations of Civil government.

(*s*) He says, he denies the use of reason in religion to the bulk of mankind, “because they *cannot* use it.”—But surely God has not left the bulk of mankind without *some* degree of reason, in a matter which of all others concerns them most. And *what* he has given them, it is certain, not only that they *can*, but that they *ought* to use it, and therefore should be left at liberty to use it.

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The truth is ; It was a blind deference to *human* authority, in the matter of religion, and not their adherence to *Scripture* : It was a fond attachment to their weak, fallible, and designing or ambitious guides, and not the assertion of their privileges, as *Christian* men, which made them *absurd* in their religious opinions : And it was the same spirit and temper which actuates the Church of *Rome*, even the love of pre-eminence and spiritual rule, and the wish (as conducive to that end) to proselyte *all* men to their own way of thinking, and to have their own interpretations of *Scripture* *universally* embraced ; in other words, (for they are the same thing) it was the love of *that* Uniformity in the Church which is so much recommended by Dr. *Balguy*, and other defenders of *Romish* policy—This it was, this arrogant and domineering temper over their fellow-christians who differed from them in opinion, which made them *dangerous* men in the state. If they had acted on the plan of the

Petition, and allowed to others the liberty of judgement they asserted to themselves, their own notions might be foolish and absurd—they might be hurtful to *themselves*: But they could not be dangerous to the State, nor in any measure formidable to a wise and equitable Government.

His other instance of danger to the State from admitting the *reformation-principle* in its full extent, is the conduct of “those
“Swarms of Sectaries which once over-
“spread this unhappy kingdom, and which
“appear *even now* to have some remains
“of life and motion.” (*t*)—Let the conduct of these Sectaries have been ever so unjustifiable, has Subscription tended in the least degree to lessen these Swarms? Nay,

(*t*) Alluding, I suppose, to those dissenting ministers, who are attempting to obtain a *legal* warrant for the liberty many of them are indulged with by a good and wise government, of exercising their public ministrations without subscribing the Established doctrines. But can any just and sufficient reason be assigned for the same indulgence being denied to the ministers of the Established Church?

do not many Sectaries from the Church continue such, and many persons become Sectaries owing entirely to this impolitic, as well as unscriptural requisition of Subscription to the Religious doctrines and commandments of men?—And if, excluded the Church in *Swarms*, they will propagate their own dangerous tenets at the hazard of subverting Civil authority itself, how is *Subscription* a remedy against this danger?—If the Magistrate cannot support his authority, when invaded from this quarter, more effectually than by Subscription, he *must* soon part with it. If he chuse to attempt its support only by unwarrantable impositions upon the judgement and consciences of his subjects, he will *deserve* to lose it. But the Magistrate in this free land knows a much more effectual method than this of supporting his *Civil authority* against every invasion of it, (happily for all sides) whether from the folly and madness of a *Sectary*, or from the ambition and insolence of a Churchman.

Neither

Neither of these instances, then, (and they are all he brings) is sufficient to prove his position, — That, if the Legislature should see fit to grant the petition, “ the “ Magistrate must support such religions as “ are directly subversive of his own authority,” (u) Indeed they are instances of the very reverse. They prove the *expediency*, not to say the *necessity* of the Magistrate’s interposition in *favour* of that Religious liberty which is prayed for : seeing his authority will ever be most respected, and consequently most secure from attempts to subvert it, while it is uniformly exerted in protecting his subjects, as well in their *religious*, as in their *civil* rights.

But here the Magistrate is admonished of danger, and told that it highly concerns him to be upon his guard against all those Protestants (under whatever denomination) and to use all possible means of excluding them from every office of trust, who main-

(u) p. 5.

tain the independence of the Church upon the state, "a principle," he observes with an air of the most sage caution, "which has too often insinuated itself into the minds of *protestants*, as well as *papists*."

(v) The caution to protestants is most preposterous: The affected sagacity of it quite ridiculous. It is *not* the papists, who maintain the independence of the Christian Church upon the state, but the protestants; all consistent protestants at least. And it is their grand charge against the Church of *Rome*, that she has made it dependent upon the *temporal* powers, and so by degrees subjected the authority of *Jesus Christ* to that of the *Pope*. But, if the Writer mean by *the Church*, the *national Church*, I know of no *protestants* in this kingdom, into whose minds this principle has farther insinuated itself, or who more need the caution, than those, and such as those, who would vindicate the Church in her claim of a right to impose *human* articles of reli-

(v) p. 14.

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gious faith upon the minds and consciences of his Majesty's protestant subjects.

We are now arrived at the last effort of your Archdeacon, which I proposed to consider, to prejudice the public against the *Petition*; and it is made somewhat in the shape of an Argument for Subscription, as here followeth — “ All forms of religion
“ are not to be favoured *equally* by the Civil
“ magistrate — To *what* forms the preference is due, *he only* is the proper judge —
“ He is *equally* a judge of the evidence,
“ by which the opinions of men are to be
“ known — But, as in many cases these opinions may not be immediately discoverable
“ from *actions*, it seems to follow, that they
“ ought to be openly declared in some public and authorized form of *words* — The
“ Subscription of men's names is, or ought
“ to be, the test of their doctrines.” (w)

That we may do all possible justice to your Archdeacon in our examination of this

(w) p. 15.

argu-

argument for Subscription to human ~~fo~~^{forms} of religion, we will be as liberal in our concessions to him as he can desire. — To return to the first of his Positions.

“ALL *forms of religion are not to be favoured EQUALLY by the Civil Magistrate.*”

—We allow it; and that some should be established in *preference* to others. Then says he, “To *WHAT forms the preference is due, HE ONLY is the proper judge.*” — For argument’s sake we will indulge him thus far also, and suppose that, though the Magistrate might be justified, and could by your adroit Archdeacon be defended in establishing *Paganism, Judaism, Mahometanism*, or any religion *under heaven*, yet, that he has established in preference to any other, the *Christian* religion. What next? Well, this farther Postulatum — “*He is EQUALLY a judge of the evidence by which the opinions of men are to be known.*” — What say you to this, Gentlemen? May we venture with safety any farther in our concessions? — Or shall we stop here? — We

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proceed ; Nay, we will venture farther upon this, and grant him *all* he demands of us, on *this term*, however, that if we like not the complexion of the argument in *the issue*, we shall be at liberty to recede.

Let the Civil magistrate, then, be allowed “ the *only proper judge of the evidence* “ *by which the opinions of men are to be known* ;” and farther be it allowed, that “ *their opinions ought to be openly declared in some public and authorized form of Words* ;” and finally, that “ *a Subscription of their names thereto ought to be taken, as a test of their doctrines* ”—There ! We have now granted *all*. And what follows ?—This follows —That the *Decrees* of the Council of *Trent* MAY be that public form of Words to which the Magistrate is authorized to require Subscription.

Whether this is not a just and regular deduction from your Archdeacon’s premises, I appeal to you, Gentlemen. Does the
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argument, on *this foot*, conclude more in favour of an establishment of our present system, than of the above-mentioned—more in favour of a *protestant*, than of a *popish* formulary of religious faith? — If he should say, that the 39 articles, being more *rational*, are therefore to be preferred, this would be to retract the power which he allows to the Civil Magistrate in this matter, and to make *himself*, not the Magistrate, the proper judge, to *what* forms the preference is due.

The argument, therefore, you see, cannot conclude in favour of a requisition to subscribe the 39 Articles, or any other *unscriptural* formulary of religion, without bringing us *as directly* to *Popery*. That indeed, you are *too* well assured, is an objection against the argument of no great moment *with your Archdeacon*. With you, I trust it is a very strong objection. And, therefore, let us now try if we cannot admit that authority which Dr. Balguy allows to Civil Magistrates, and *apply* it, in pleading the cause of the *Petitioners*, more con-

sistently with the *general* principles of our present Religious establishment, and without such a shameful revolt from protestantism.

The Civil Magistrate being, we now grant, the *only* proper judge to *what* form of religion the preference is due, has preferred that of *Christianity*. But, because the profession of Christianity, *as* it is established at *Rome*, appears to him unfit for his subjects, subversive of their liberties, and dangerous to his own just authority, and he *only* being the judge of the evidence by which the opinions of his subjects are to be known, He has therefore preferred *Holy Scripture* to *every other* form of Words, as the test of their religious doctrines, judging it also to be the Word of *God*.

Having thus got the Civil Magistrate on the side of the Scripture, and the argument on its right and *protestant* footing, we can safely proceed with your Archdeacon to a conclusion in favour of *Subscription*—a Subscription, however, on a much more equitable

table and *creditable* plan, than that on which he would vindicate it. Does he contend, that “as, in many cases, the opinions of
 “men may not be immediately discoverable from *actions*, they ought to be openly
 “declared in some public and authorized
 “form of *Words*?”—*Holy Scripture*, we say, is that public and *authorized* form of Words. Does he farther contend, that “the *Subscription* of men’s names is, or ought to
 “be, the test of their doctrines?”—Let this be the test. Let *Subscription* be required to that public and authorized form of Words, which the Magistrate has preferred for that purpose. Will he still insist upon the propriety and expediency of requiring Subscription to some *human* form of words, rather than to the *Holy Scriptures* at large? — Let this also be done. We are not, (though we are often represented in that invidious light) either so averse to *all* Subscriptions, or so scrupulous about subscribing to any *human* formulary whatsoever, but we can indulge your Archdeacon, consistently with our principles, in this point
 too.

too. Only let this be done in *consistence* with the preference already made by the Magistrate. For a test of the religious opinions of his subjects, he has preferred *Holy Scripture* to any other form of words declarative of mens religious opinions. If, then, an *human* form of words can, in this case, be admitted as expedient to be subscribed, it must be *such* a form as refers to *Holy Scripture*, not to the determinations of *men*, such a form as binds upon the Subscriber the exclusive authority of Scripture, as a rule of his religious faith and doctrines. And thus we are come by just steps to a conclusion full in favour of our Suit to Parliament, and equally consistent with the rights of Civil Magistracy, with every claim, which, in the matter of religion can be justly laid to an authority over the subjects of this free *protestant* State.

If, Gentlemen, in being the more particular on this part of my subject, I have trespassed on your patience, the peculiar propriety and importance of discussing this point

point must be my apology. Because the authority of *the Church*, or *Church-governors*, to impose unscriptural articles of faith, as pleaded in the outset of this debate by Dr. *Rutherford*, being of some time given up, the argument for such an Imposition from the rights of *Civil Magistracy* is still continued. And, though enough has been said in a *general* way, to evince the weakness of the argument on *that* ground also, yet it was still left to our opponents (but it was *all* that was left *them*) to try to render our attempt suspicious to the *Civil Power*. Indeed, our applying to the Legislature itself for *its* sanction to our cause, as it seems to have offended certain churchmen of *the antiquated* cast of thinking on these matters, might, one would think, have prevented all apprehensions of a design on the *other* hand.

It is to be hoped, however, that, the argument for the removal of the Subscription in *question* appearing irrefragable in those very principles of Legislation which obtain in this realm, prejudice itself, if, in some minds,

minds, it know not how to yield to reason, will at least be defeated of its aim in the conquests which truth and reason are *now* daily making over minds more ingenuous and open to conviction. In *this view* of the argument we may hope to appear, in future, to have acted with peculiar propriety and consistency, when we submitted our cause to Parliament, and be considered in that application, not as dissatisfied with the authority claimed by the Magistrate, but, on the contrary, as fully satisfied therewith, and therefore suing to the Legislative body for an interposition of that authority to redress a religious grievance, which continues not without a manifest inconsistency with *his own* establishment, and derogation from *his own* judgment.

For, how can the imposition of *human* articles of *religion* consist with that freedom of judgement and liberty of conscience, which is the right of *every man*—shall I say?—No. I will not put it *now* on that *general* foot—How doth it consist with

with the *judgement* of the *Civil Magistrate* already declared, and the *actual* establishment of the *Sufficiency* and *exclusive authority* of *Holy Writ*, as a rule of religious faith and practice to all his subjects. (x) How doth such an imposition upon the ministers of the *national Church*, comport with the *Bond* the Magistrate has laid them

(x) It is expressly declared in the articles themselves, both that the Church ought not to decree any thing that is *contrary* to God's word written, and that *besides* the same She ought not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation. Yet every *human* creed is undeniably *beside*, though it may not be *contrary*, in point of faith, to God's word written.— Dr. Balguy, however, out of his wonderful acuteness, would insinuate that what is *beside* Scripture is not enforced *as a term of salvation*; nor even as a *rule of faith*; but only as a *term of admission* into the ministry, and as *prudential means of Uniformity*. But has he forgot the contents of the VIIth Article, which declares that the three Creeds, there mentioned, ought *thoroughly* to be *believed*, as well as *received*?—And has he not said or SUNG *Athanasius's* creed oft enough by this time to know, that he maketh profession of *believing* it on peril of his *Salvation*?

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under, at their admission to the office of a Priest by requiring them to promise and engage, in the most awful words, and in the most solemn manner, even at the altar, and in the presence of the Bishop—"That they will instruct the people committed to their charge *out of* the Holy Scriptures, and teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) but that which *they shall* be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture."—And further they promise, (which supposeth them bound to enquire all their life afterwards *for themselves*) "That they will be diligent in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and *in such studies as help to the knowledge* of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh." (y) The inconstitence of the requisition in debate with these obligations, is too glaring to be denied.

It may be hoped, therefore, that in at-

(y) See the office for Ordaining Priests.

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tempting to obtain a repeal of such laws *only* as clash with those which perfectly accord with the *main* and *essential* parts of Our constitution in Church and State, we shall be considered by our brethren who wish well to the cause of reformation, but differ from us with respect to the *mode* of advancing it, in a more favourable light, than they have hitherto, whether from the representation of our opponents, or from a partial view of the argument, been disposed to consider us, and our design. (z)

(z) God quiet the consciences of those men, who are seeking relief to them in an application to the *Fathers* of the Church! *So far* my hearty prayers attend upon their endeavours. At the same time I am persuaded they will be convinced, before any effectual relief is obtained, of the impropriety of importuning their Lordship's to come forwards in a matter they have so long declined to stir in, and, in my apprehension, with great judgement and propriety declined, *till* the Legislature see fit to take off the obligation of subscribing the forms of faith, which are confessed to need an alteration. Hoc prius tentandum.

In short, we shall hope to be considered by all our Countrymen, who understand and value the religious freedom which the Constitution we live under doth, in its *original* principles, ensure to us, *not* as adversaries either of the Church or State, but as those who wish and would consult for the honour, stabilitment, and prosperity of both.

And now, Gentlemen, in the issue of this argument for the removal of Subscription, conducted on your Archdeacon's own positions, respecting the right of choice and judgement in the Civil magistrate, does there not lie a plain and just determination in the *Negative* of a Question some time ago proposed, (*aa*) as more

(*aa*) In a free and candid Disquisition on Religious establishments in general, and the Church of England in particular, occasioned by Mr. Foster's Visitation Sermon, &c. p. 67.

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immediately interesting to the Established clergy — “ Whether Subscription to the 39 Articles of the Church of *England* be *constitutionally* required of them? — And may we not hope that, under the conviction that it is not even a *constitutional* requisition, you will be ingenuous in publicly asserting your privileges, as members of the *English Church* itself; and no longer be discouraged from joining us in our determination to continue our Suit for redress of the Grievance in the same constitutional way and respectful manner in which it commenced.

But, Gentlemen, though we can only hope for, and may be disappointed of your countenance and support in *this* way, we will not doubt of your good *wishes* to our cause, and that, while we wait the issue with a persevering confidence in the wisdom and justice of a British, Protestant Legislature, you will concur with us in making our Suit to *Him*, in whose rule
and

and governance are the hearts of all men
 — *That he would so dispose and govern
 the hearts of our Rulers, that, in this mat-
 ter, they may consult the advancement of his
 Glory, the good of HIS Church, and the safety,
 honour, and welfare of the State.*

I am,

Rev. Gentlemen,

Your most Respectful,

And most affectionate Brother in Christ,

BURGH,
 Jan. 30, 1773.

B. DAWSON

T H E E N D.